



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Asian American Commission

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Retreat Meeting Minutes

Sunday, July 21st, 2013

International Hostel, Boston

Absent Commissioners are highlighted on left.

Remote Participants are indicated by an asterisk*.

Rep. Tackey Chan Discussed the \$35k Appropriations:

Rep. Chan advised the AAC to go before all the committees to negotiate every issue, and to lobby legislative members to support issues such as education, health care, etc. in order to maintain/increase funds. Someone on the Commission needs to report before the Ways & Means in 6 months. It is advisable to file the report with the House/Senate clerks and to report to a constitutional advisor. In 6 months AAC should give the report and have a conversation on whether or not to have more than 35k. There needs to be a demonstration of proper controls, trust fund in order, and some kind of a partnership agreement with the Treasury.

Grace reaffirmed what Rep. Chan talked about regarding having someone talk to the State/House. This is something we can't take for granted and is a rapid process as there are only 6 months to get things done. There needs to be an objective on why and how to use the funding most effectively and account for it. In December, budget needs to be filed by the Governor and in mid-February, the hearings on the budget will occur. The AAC fits under the constitutional orgs when it comes to hearings. The goal of the budget hearing should be what AAC can do to not only maintain funding, but increase it as well. There are some suggestions to have a separate trust fund to solicit money, similar to the MA Cultural Council. The Treasurer's wife works there, so speak to her about this. AAC needs to show different means to demonstrate fiscal responsibility. Later, AAC should post their annual report on their website. The new Finance & Admin Committee will be responsible for this.

Professor Paul Watanabe from UMass Boston:

AAC got off to a strong start and had interesting hearings mainly dealing with issues of violence in schools related to the AA community. However, there were two main problems when it came to the Commission. First, the Commission's success depended upon who the governor was at that time. When Weld left, other governors would appoint political supporters in the Commission, which led to a lack of diversity. The second problem was funding. Paul was an early advocate to create a permanent state agency to deal with Asian American issues in which the Commission would be able to receive funding.

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At this time, the Asian American community has been poorly funded. The Boston Foundation Group had given \$1 million to Asian American communities, but that may not be good enough. Asians are becoming the fastest growing racial group in the US and MA and are not receiving enough money for support. Paul advised the Commission to bring the attention of the growing Asian American community to people running for Governor and Treasurer, letting them know the importance of the Asian American community and ask if they will help AA communities. Although not many states have committees dedicated to Asia Americans, Paul advised to examine Washington State's AAC and believes it can be a model.

Paul and the Institute of Asian American Studies (IAAS) have been doing extensive research on the census in regards to the growing Asian American population. The works can be found on their website at www.iaas.umb.edu. The MA census provides data on Asian Americans for different age groups, poverty levels and how do they measure with the Black community. However, Paul wants to gather more information, specifically in regards to the diverse Asian American communities in MA as well as the organizations involved in these communities.

There has been a lot of debate about immigration and the IAAS is looking into research on providing info on immigrants in MA. As mentioned before, the Asian American community consists of the largest immigrant community with over 2/3 of the immigrant population. Latinos comprise of 44%, whites 4%, and blacks 6%. IAAS wants to provide data in understanding their role when it comes to taxes and social benefits. One of the few areas in which money can be allocated in is health issues prevalent in the Asian American community. Issues such as hepatitis B, mental issues, and gambling are topics that be addressed. Paul is frustrated at the lack of resources and focus the state has on Asian American community.

The IAAS with support from the MA Gaming Commission have begun to study college teens and their involvement with gambling. This study started in September and The IAAS wants to have a better understanding into the gambling culture that is prevalent in the AA communities. They examined the students' family life and seeing if issues such as financial problems or smoking and drinking habits which are leading to excessive gambling.

Voter turnout and registration is an issue in the AA community. There is data on blacks and Latinos, but for the most part, voting information is ignored in the Asian American communities. Research is expensive, and data is collected usually by examining residents list. The problem with the residents list is not a variable. With that being said, IAAC developed a way to create their own large database and ran it against the residents list, focusing on the 11 cities with the largest AA population. They found out that the Asian American voter turnout is the lowest in MA. What can we do to educate them?

The Commission invites Paul back for exclusive discussion about lack of funding that needed to be pushed through. At this time, AAC didn't think it would take this long to get funding, but AAC has always suffered to lack in resources, so they developed relationship with IAAC. Moving forward, all of events should be in conjunction with Institute, so if we get funding, need to advocate for Institute.

Executive Committee Elections on August 20, 2013:

Elections need to be in sync with the budget cycle now that appropriations are in effect. Future voting needs to take place during the summer to elect the incoming Executive Committee officers. Over the phone voting is allowed as long as quorum is met (7 members in person).

Robert Medina from Social Security Administration:

Robert Medina is the Rep for Region 1 in the White House and is the Communication Director. The goal of his organization is to facilitate agencies that may assist the Asian American communities with things such as social security. Robert and Ken An are assigned to bring in other federal agencies to share/provide info on how to educate public on employment within the Fed. They would like to ensure the success in NE and perhaps bring a forum to conduct/collect info. Robert works directly with SSA and collaborates with the White House AAPI. They are trying to be more responsive to people's needs. For example, provide direct answers to Obamacare questions. Come December, they need to submit a report to the White House.

Grace: Our current leaders are making themselves available and this opportunity will not be available forever. Chris: In September's YLS event, many attendees may like info on accessing fed jobs during the lunch networking session. Roberto will ask usa.gov website for suggestions. Ken: We can educate attendees on the internal hiring process. Robert will bring agencies to hold info sessions to educate on affordable care act, mental health, Medicare coverage, SSA, eligibility and guidelines. The info will need to be bilingual because of the disparity. What happens after the event/report? We will create a workgroup to share info. Grace: We will do annual conference sponsored by AAC to create dialogue with the presence of experts. Ken will be the internal contact regarding work with the WHAAPI.

Elisa Choi & Nick on ED Search Committee:

Last month, Elisa and Nick on the Executive Committee have been a search process for the next Executive Director. They have been meeting on weekly conference calls and Jason has been the administrative support providing the job description and what he envisions the position to be. Furthermore, Jason will be training the new ED so the person will be able to get acclimated. The deadline is 7/31, but can be revisited if a candidate for the ED is not found and they do not want the timeframe to dictate their search. Although the position at this moment is part-time, it can change depending on how the end goals are met. However, the message about the position the Commission wants to relay is that it is an opportunity for them to develop both personally and professionally and that they will be the face of the AAC. All the participants of the Young Leaders Symposium have received an email regarding the ED position. Other possible suggestions are to talk to Peace Corps and AmeriCorps members.

Fundraising:

The AAC has relied on one large fundraiser, the Unity Dinner. However, they need to have two fundraisers in both the Spring and Fall while also having smaller ones on a more consistent basis. Some of the members suggested the Commissioners having small dinner parties to raise money. Priti has volunteered for the Fundraising Committee. It is for the Admin/Finance subcommittee to discuss further.

Young Leaders Symposium:

Chunfai and Chris are co-chairing it. The Young Leaders Symposium is scheduled to be on September 27, 2013 and the program will run from 9-3 and be in the Great Hall at the State House. Commission members are expected to be there early in the morning and stay later to assist. There is also discussion on having the Commissioners on a rotating basis to help man the event. The event will be broken down into morning and afternoon sessions with the morning focusing on the different AAIP communities. NAAAP will come in to discuss topics such as tiger mothers in the afternoon session. Lunch will be provided and there will be a raffle at the end. The Commission should invite the legislators to allow them to see the strong numbers of our attendance. Chunfai will talk to Jason about the online application, nametags and a spreadsheet of all duties. The Young Leaders Symposium has been exclusively funded by the Asian American Commission, but there are discussions to work with NAAAP and the AARW. Last years, many professors brought their students. The Young Leaders Symposium is a strong potential to get grants and we should be looking for sponsors by talking to corporate HR and let them know how they can get involved in YLS.

Healthcare Initiatives:

Elisa made some outreach calls and members will be receiving an email from Elisa shortly. Elisa talked about using the Director of Multicultural Affairs in Public Health and to get something out of the organization. She wants to have informational sessions that will address access to care and that topics related to health issues becomes more transparent. There is also an idea to make these forums into fundraisers, but it needs to get done by the end of the calendar year. The budget will have to break down these requests.

One of the programs discussed was to have healthcare forums, which was indicated by Paul Lee. These health care forums would talk about various resources such as all nonprofit orgs involved in healthcare. There were also talks about having someone from the Obama Administration talk about Obamacare, how the communities can have better access, and connect people. AAC would like to hold multiple health care forums in different regions, same group and model, which would introduces us to community and give them valuable info.

Gaming:

Those interested in the Gaming Committee should email Grace. Gaming is an issue that is prevalent in AA communities. AAC should work with Paul Watanabe to address this issue. Kajal has volunteered to be the interim chair for gaming. In one year there needs to be a letter stating the Commission's involvement and that UMass is doing a study and this is something we are interested in. Some suggestions have been to talk to the Compulsive Gambling Council.

Program Suggestions:

At the last AAC meeting, there were talks about focusing on the Treasury office expansion to create more jobs. Gilbert Ho and Wingkay Leung met with the Treasury to discuss this. There is a problem in regards to loans as they tend to mix in their loan money with their money they have. However, the AAC needs to ensure that the Asian American community can borrow money. Furthermore, there was a discussion that different Asian American communities have different needs for their communities and there should be a larger financial literacy program that gives Asian an opportunity to understand money. The Treasury Office and Attorney General's Office have good financial literacy programs and would be beneficial to collaborate with them on this. In the short-term, there should be a program that offers financial literacy and teaches how to save money. It was discussed that these seminars can take place in the State House, Lowell, and Worcester. Ken said he wanted to work on a cultural competency program.